

EXHIBIT 7

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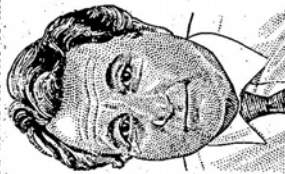
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Wall Street Mystery Features a Big Board Rival

By RANDALL SMITH
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
Here's a tantalizing Wall Street mystery:

The Securities and Exchange Commission recently cracked down on one of the largest-ever sales of unregistered securities. Investors had poured \$440 million into investment pools raised by two Florida accountants, who for more than a decade took in money without telling the SEC or making required financial disclosures to investors.



Bernard L. Madoff

The pair had promised investors hard-to-believe annual returns of 13.5% to 20%—to be obtained by turning the money over to be managed by an unnamed broker.

Regulators feared it all might be just a huge scam. "We went into this thinking it could be a major catastrophe," says Richard Walker, the SEC's New York regional administrator.

But when a court-appointed trustee went in, the money was all there. Indeed, the mystery money manager was beating the promised returns by such a wide margin that the two accountants ditched their accounting business in 1984 to concentrate on their more lucrative investing

touch? The SEC, which last month went to court to shut down the operation, won't say. Neither will the lawyer for the two accountants, Frank J. Avellino and Michael S. Bienes of Fort Lauderdale.

But the mystery broker turns out to be none other than Bernard L. Madoff—a highly successful and controversial figure on Wall Street, but until now not known as an ace money manager.

Mr. Madoff is one of the masters of the off-exchange "third market" and the bane of the New York Stock Exchange. He has built a highly profitable securities firm, Bernard L. Madoff Investment Securities, which siphons a huge volume of stock trades away from the Big Board. The \$740 million average daily volume of trades executed electronically by the Madoff firm off the exchange equals 9% of the New York exchange's.

Mr. Madoff's firm can execute trades so quickly and cheaply that it actually pays other brokerage firms a penny a share to execute their customers' orders, profiting from the spread between bid and asked prices that most stocks trade for.

In an interview, the 54-year-old Mr. Madoff says he didn't know the money he was managing had been raised illegally. And he insists the returns were really nothing special, given that the Standard & Poor's 500-stock index generated an average annual return of 16.3% between November 1982 and November 1992. "I would be surprised if anybody thought that matching the S&P over 10 years was

In fact, most investors would have been delighted to be promised such returns in advance, as the accountants' investors were. That's especially true since the majority of money managers actually trailed the S&P 500 during the 1980s.

The best evidence that the returns were very attractive: the size of the pools mushroomed by word-of-mouth, without any big marketing effort by the Avellino & Bienes partnership. The number of investors eventually grew to 3,200 in nine accounts with the Madoff firm. "They took in nearly a half a billion dollars in customer money totally outside the system that we can monitor and regulate," says the SEC's Mr. Walker. "That's pretty frightening."

An SEC civil complaint filed in New York federal court Nov. 17 charged that Messrs. Avellino and Bienes "have operated A&B as an unregistered investment company and have engaged in the unlawful sale of unregistered securities," and ordered the money returned to investors by a court-appointed trustee, New York attorney Lee Richards.

The two 56-year-old accountants declined to comment. Their attorney, Ira Lee Sorkin, says they didn't know that the notes they had issued to their clients should have been registered with the SEC, and he says that investors got their money back and haven't complained.

If the notes had been registered, they would have had to include a description of how the money was being invested, and by whom. In addition, Avellino & Bienes would have had to send investors annual

But how did Mr. Madoff rack up his big investment returns? Early investors in the late 1970s were told—and Mr. Madoff confirms—that their money was being used to engage in so-called convertible arbitrage in securities of such companies as Occidental Petroleum Corp., Limited Stores Inc. and Continental Corp.

In such a strategy, an investor buys a company's preferred stock or bonds that pay high dividends and are convertible into the company's common stock; the investor simultaneously sells borrowed common stock of the same company in a "short sale" to hedge against a stock-price decline.

The investor earns the spread between the higher dividend paid on the convertible securities and the lower dividend on the common stock, plus interest from investing the proceeds of the stock short sale. Using borrowed money, or leverage, to magnify returns, an investor can reap double-digit returns. But the strategy carries big risks if interest rates rise and stock prices go down.

Mr. Madoff said his investment strategy changed around 1982, when his firm began using a greater variety of strategies tied to the stock market, including the use of stock-index futures and "market-neutral" arbitrage, which can involve buying and selling different stocks in an industry group.

Mr. Madoff said, "The basic strategy was to be long a broad-based portfolio of S&P securities and hedged with derivatives," such as futures and options. Such a

